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Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, SC, Features Two Exhibitions Focused on Animals

The Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, SC, announces two special exhibitions, *Animal Instinct: Paintings by Shelley Reed* and *Cheer for the Home Team: Animal Mascots from the Collection*, on view concurrently from May 16 through Sept. 14, 2014. *Animal Instinct* illustrates animals in exquisite detail in the tradition of Old Master painting - but with a contemporary twist - while *Cheer for the Home Team* explores the power and symbolism that animals have to rally our spirits and camaraderie. Both shows offer delightful and fascinating visual experiences to inspire and educate all audiences as the CMA continues to fulfill its mission to bring to the Midlands exceptional exhibitions of fine art.



Ram (after Oudry,) by Shelley Reed, 2007, 20" x 20" circle

The CMA is the first museum to present a career retrospective of American artist Shelley Reed. *Animal Instinct: Paintings by Shelley Reed* is an impressive selection of approximately 40 large-scale black and white paintings of animals, including a wall-length mural. These oils on canvas are based on Old Master paintings where animals often stand in for people and are used

to create visual parables about the strengths and failings of human nature. Animals in lush, gorgeous paintings communicate with each other, flirt with each other, and consume each other. Reed is an unexpected painter because she does not use color in her current work, although she started out as a colorist. Her palette shrank as she became less interested in exploiting color and more interested in exploring the meaning of Old Master paintings.

"Reed's art is unexpected," says CMA Chief Curator Will South, "because she works exclusively in black and white where the tradition of animal painting has been all color. She also works on a very big scale. The combination of silvery, shimmering surfaces and huge canvases makes us feel like we're looking at old Hollywood movies; only here the animals are the stars."

Reed not only makes Old Master paintings feel contemporary by making them large and dismissing color, but she focuses on the contrasting mixture of wildness, as represented by tigers, lions, birds, and other animals, with high culture. She is fascinated with how human beings tend to understand the world in terms of themselves, yet wild animals have their own natures. She explores this complexity in both complicated narratives and simple animal portraits. The result is that we readily identify animals that boast, strut, threaten or attract other animals and at the same time realize that despite being the subjects of fine art, wild animals resist civilization. It is not their nature.

The art says they fit in, and so Reed has a built-in tension to her narratives. The grandest narrative in the show is a 47-foot-long mural entitled, *In Dubious Battle*, where a panorama of fighting, playing, and posing unfolds. The mural, with its cast of characters and dynamic action, feels like a silent movie where we get to invent the story

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along with the animals and the artist.

"The rewards for looking at the art of Shelley Reed are many," says South. "We are awed by her expert control of paint, and entertained by the high-energy compositions she puts together. And, beyond all that, we think about the ideas embedded in these wonderful pictures: how civilized are we, really? Are we not animals too, of a different stripe? Her paintings say we are."

Reed is represented by the Sears-Peyton Gallery in New York. She has had solo shows in New York, Toronto, and Boston and has participated in many group shows around the country. The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston has awarded her both the 2005 Maud Morgan Award and a Traveling Fellowship in 2013. Reed's work can be found in public and private collections including: Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Lila Acheson Wallace Collection, Bank of Boston, Rose Art Museum, Danforth Museum, and the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park. The artist is based in Boston.

Cheer for the Home Team: Animal Mascots from the Collection is a family-friendly exhibition comprised of 41 works from the CMA collection featuring animals that serve as college mascots. The exhibition explores the qualities of certain animals that make them popular as symbols of luck to lead their schools to victory on the field, like the fighting gamecock and the tiger. A diversity of objects is drawn from all aspects of the collection, including European paintings, American folk art, and Asian ceramics. The exhibition features a number of the Museum's Audubon prints, as well as works by Eugène Delacroix, Romare Bearden, Edmund Yaghjian, Constantine Manos, and Sigmund Abeles. Many of these pieces are being shown for the first time in a number of years.

"This exhibition has such a wide variety of objects and animals that every visitor will find something to love," says CMA Curator Victoria Cooke. "It is fun to learn more about the history of animals in art, but also the stories of the mascots and how they were chosen by the colleges and universities."

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Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix, French, 1798-1863, *Tiger en Arret*, 1854, cliché-verre. Museum purchase in 1983.

Sports fans have a good time identifying the mascots for various teams across the US, while children, animal lovers, and fine art enthusiasts revel in the various styles and assortment of wildlife portrayed in the pieces. Visitors learn about the history of mascots for college sports teams as well as some of the unlikely and unusual mascots that have come to lead the rallying cry for their schools.

Both of these exhibitions are simply fun for all ages and educational as well. Free multimedia TAP tours for children focusing on animals in both *Animal Instinct* and *Cheer for the Home Team* are available to guide and teach families when they visit the shows. The CMA offers other free, fun family-friendly activities related to the exhibitions, such as art explorer backpacks, interactive components in the Education Gallery, scavenger hunts, art classes, and gallery guides. To learn more about these programs and family-friendly tours visit (columbiamuseum.org/learn/family-friendly).

Animal Instinct: Paintings by Shelley Reed is sponsored by Joyce and George Hill with support provided by Susan Thorpe and John Baynes.

For further information check our SC institutional Gallery listing, call the Museum at 803/799-2810 or visit (www.columbiamuseum.org).